

Memorandum of conversation with Ray Cline, July 20, 1964.

1. Expectations on missiles.

As of the September 19 estimate, the language of the estimate suggests that odds of about 3 to 1 against the appearance of MRBMs in Cuba. , added reflected in his cables from Nice, were at least 3 to 1 in favor of the missiles (some report McConex as being "almost certain" , odds of 10 to 1 or better in favor). Cline found himself in the middle of these two positions; at this date, probably betting somewhat against the missiles. In the minds of the top Administration officials however, JFK, Bundy, Bobby Kennedy, the probability of the missiles was even lower than it was for the ONE analysts: at least 10 to 1 against the missiles. Moreover, this probability did not significantly rise for them until the 16th, when they learned that the missiles were in place; thus, this burst on them as a very considerable surprise. Meanwhile, the agent and refugee reports and the IL-28s were beginning to worry Cline, and the probability of missiles was rising in his mind, to something better than even odds (though still not high). He saw several, though not all, of the reports in question, and the report of the refugee who sketched the missiles and described the on the trailers struck him, in particular, as significant: either the man had been overcoached by the interrogators, or was a nut ("this is always a possibility") or he had really seen some missiles. (It is probably true that Kennedy had not ~~heard~~ seen any of these reports before October 9th, when the October 14th flight was targeted. But the probability of missiles did not, Cline thinks,

go up significantly in Administration lines on learning of these reports, or on learning of the IL-28s. They paid almost no attention to the IL-28s; ⁱⁿ Kennedy's mind, the public did not regard these as sexy. Missiles were sexy. (Among the estimators, Neil Highland ^{? ?} was worried by the appearance of the IL-28s; although it had been estimated that they might well appear, ^{of Soviet investment} they were turning up too soon; the whole process/was taking place suspiciously fast; moreover, he had always been thinking that the time to start worrying about MRBMs was after the IL-28s had appeared. On the other hand, John Whitman was, if anything, relaxed by the appearance of the IL-28s, since this had been predicted and seemed simply to confirm the overall pattern of Soviet deployment that had been projected. The "last item" was falling into place.)

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3. The public commitments. In the discussion which led to the September 4th public statement, Cline recalls that he questioned the use of the offensive-defensive distinction as being vague and as covering items which the Administration clearly was not concerned about, even at that time, such as IL-28s. In the confusion of the discussion, he thinks that of the 20 or so persons present at the White House, only 4 or 5 had much idea of what ~~zh~~ was being drafted, and those who did were being rather casual about it. Cline pointed out then that the nature of the language, "gravest issues would arise," constituted a very strong commitment to action, and although he personally was happy to see such a commitment he felt it necessary to draw attention to this point. He thinks that the purpose of the commitment was not purely for domestic political reaction, ~~w~~ but was mainly for deterrent effect; the Administration leaders regarded as highly unlikely the Soviets would take the act they mentioned, but possible, and they felt that this announcement might be just ~~wx~~ what was needed to deter them ~~if~~ they should come to have it in mind at all. On the other hand, ^{if} the Administration leaders had felt it more likely that the Soviets ~~wxx~~ really were considering these moves, and that a commitment might not be almost certain to deter them, Cline feels that they probably would not have made the public commitments. (Although Cline did not say so, it seems possible that it was only the position of McCone that led them to assign any significance to the credence to the possibility at all at this point; on the other hand, if McCone had succeeded in persuading them to adopt his own view of the likelihood, they would probably not have issued the commitment. Although it is not clear just what they would have ~~x~~ done in the latter case, it seems possible that in the absence of public commitments, at least the style and perhaps the very nature of their subsequent actions ^{would} ~~mighx~~ have been critically ~~xxfx~~ affected.

Thus, the eventual successful resistance to the Soviet moves might have depended heavily ~~on~~ upon McCone's being active up til August 23rd and absent thereafter; or, McCone's expressing his own views but having the Board of National Estimates opposing him.) The decision to ask for authority to call up the 150,000 reservists was made at the same meeting that led to the Sept. 4th statement, after most of the participants had left. Apparently Cline pressed for such an action, to give to the commitment. (He had just started to describe this when our session broke up.) Subsequently Cline had many discussions with Bundy about the policy implications on the commitments; he does not, however, think that the Administration leaders gave any particular ~~thought~~ thought to the ~~possible~~ actions that might be involved carrying out those commitments.

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For example, Kent does not believe that McCone saw all of the Kennedy-Krushchev letters, at least on a current basis.

Kent does not believe that the estimates turned ^{out} ~~up~~ during the weeks of the 16-28 of October, 1962, had any particular effect on policy making. "Everyone had access to about the same amount of information." (Highland and Whitman mentioned ~~xxx~~ some other factors; the fact that the estimators were somewhat discredited at that point, by their recent past estimates; the pressures of time; the tendency of the estimators in each department to spend more attention on informing their own department heads than on ~~examining and producing~~ producing coordinated estimates. Kent ~~he~~ did not comment on the question of whether the estimators are accorded ~~gxxx~~ greater expertise and weight of experience in predicting Soviet responses to U.S. moves, even in crisis situations where the estimators do not actually ~~x~~ have access to more data than do the policy makers.)

In general, Kent believes that decision makers often do ~~h~~ value the national estimate ^{as the} ~~xxxxxx~~ product of a relatively unbiased, uncommitted organization, and a product separate from the estimates produced by Desk Officers and advisors within their own department. If the policy maker happens to agree with the ONE estimate, he finds it useful to cite in supporting this decision, in particular if it contradicts an estimate or opinion opposing his within his own department or another department. Without this relatively independent expression of opinion, it might be difficult for a policy maker to oppose a strongly held and ~~xxxxxxxx~~ presumptively expert opinion advanced within his own department (Kent cited Walter Robertson as an example of an officer with strong and rather wild opinions).

2. On McCone's role during the Cuban crisis, Kent noted that, "A man with a maverick opinion isn't going to be very influential if he isn't right there." In other words, since McCone was out of town, his opinion, which was shared by almost no one, was received ^{with} ~~much~~ less attention than if he had been present. On the other hand, if McCone had been ~~xxx~~ in town during the writing of ~~the~~ ^{the} September 19th estimate, Kent said: "If he had decided to write that estimate himself, if he had said 'I've been listening to the bull you people have been putting out for ten weeks, now I'm going to write this my way, the estimate is going to say that I know the Soviets are putting those missiles in,' if he had said that on the basis of the evidence ~~of~~ that was then available, he would have been in more trouble than anyone ~~w~~ had ever been in that spot. He would have had a real fight on his hands from the whole community."

3. The Sept. 19th estimate.

ONE asked the opinions of Kohler, Bolland, and other Soviet experts. All of them agreed that they would have written the estimate the same way, that it was the only way to write it given the evidence. I should see the Strayer report, written at Princeton by a board of consultants to ONE including Klaus Knorr. ONE put out a crisis weekly review, surveying crisis situations that were likely to become critical ^{period} ~~xxxxxxx~~ ranging from a week or two away to six months or a year. This was finally discontinued because of a view expressed by Walt Rostow, "I've never seen anything in this review that I didn't know already." Maxwell Taylor was its only fan. However, it did correspond to a gap in the warning process, since the watch committee concentrates almost entirely upon indications of hostilities, and spends little time looking at non-Bloc phenomena.

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In general, Kent believes that decision makers often do ~~h~~ value the national estimate ^{as the} ~~xxxxxx~~ product of a relatively unbiased, uncommitted organization, and a product separate from the estimates produced by Desk Officers and advisors within their own department. If the policy maker happens to agree with the ONE estimate, he finds it useful to cite in supporting this decision, in particular if it contradicts an estimate or opinion opposing his within his own department or another department. Without this relatively independent expression of opinion, it might be difficult for a policy maker to oppose a strongly held and ~~allegedly~~ ~~xxx~~ presumptively expert opinion advanced within his own department (Kent cited Walter Robertson as an example of an officer with strong and rather wild opinions).

2. On McCone's role during the Cuban crisis, Kent noted that, "A man with a maverick opinion isn't going to be very influential if he isn't right there." In other words, since McCone was out of town, his opinion, which was shared by almost no one, was received ^{with} ~~much~~ less attention than if he had been present. On the other hand, if McCone had been ~~present~~ in town during the writing of ~~this~~ ^{the} September 19th estimate, Kent said: "If he had decided to write that estimate himself, if he had said 'I've been listening to the bull you people have been putting out for ten weeks, now I'm going to write this my way, the estimate is going to say that I know the Soviets are putting those missiles in,' if he had said that on the basis of the evidence ~~of~~ that was then available, he would have been in more trouble than anyone ~~who~~ had ever been in that spot. He would have had a real fight on his hands from the whole community."

3. The Sept. 19th estimate.

ONE asked the opinions of Kohler, Bolland, and other Soviet experts. All of them agreed that they would have written the estimate the same way, that it was the only way to write it given the evidence. I should see the Strayer report, written at Princeton by a board of consultants to ONE including Klaus Knorr. ONE put out a crisis weekly review, surveying crisis situations that were likely to become critical ^{period} ~~xxxxxxx~~ ranging from a week or two away to six months or a year. This was finally discontinued because of a view expressed by Walt Rostow, "I've never seen anything in this review that I didn't know already." Maxwell Taylor was its only fan. However, it did correspond to a gap in the warning process, since the watch committee concentrates almost entirely upon indications of hostilities, and spends little time looking at non-Bloc phenomena.